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Letters and Correspondence

Paul Turner Sargent

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Paul to Dario July 30, 1943

Paul Sargent

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P to Dario July 30, 1943 (Labled "Comoflage"

Dear Dario,

Your letter suggests that you are a rather busy man. I can well understand that it is that way.

You have missed one very warm summer heat by being away from Illinois. It has been rather steady for six weeks or more and this can be classed as a hot summer, although the temperature has not yet reached 100 degree. The humidity does the trick.

The garden is doing fairly well now but we are needing rain. Have had some light showers the last few days but nothing better. Have had ripe tomatoes for two weeks now. My guess is that we will be lacking rain a great deal more when we get it. So much in the spring has to be balanced somewhere along the line—the law of opposites working you know.

The idea of camouflage is not so deep and mysterious. All one needs to do is to study how nature does it constantly. The animals and birds and bees and bugs all follow the scheme. The green snake in the foliage. I haven't found any this year. They are up to a yard long, slender and are green like their background. They are not very wild and you can't make one bite you—or try to.

One day in the woods I stopped by a bush with white flowers. While I was looking at them I started to handle them and a large butterfly flew away that was marked just like the flowers, so much that it was invisible to me at close range. Lately I have found many large green worms on the tomato plants; they match the green leaves and they also are stretched along a stem—both things helping to camouflage them!

The quail is a bird that is perfectly camouflaged against its usual background, dead leaves and dead grass.

Camouflage is so self evident a thing in nature that it is strange that its use in war never dawned on man until the last two wars. Of course the plan had much to do with it, but it would have been a great advantage to the army with sense enough to use the advantages long before the plane appeared on the battlefield. Back in our Civil War northern soldiers wore a dark blue that stood out as well against the background as as the

enemy could hope. At the beginning of the First W.W. the French wore uniforms with both red and blue. We are so slow to learn.

Any one with a painting experience can understand camouflage. It depends upon the idea used in painting—identity of value and color, and also texture. When the “camouflagers” break up the masses of a building with painted patterns and destroy the shadows cast by same, they are striving for identity of texture, trying to match the bldg. with its surroundings.

Camouflage in nature and in use by man is meant for protection; in the struggle for existence nature will ways use it, but man, if he recovers from being a devil, will have not more use for protection.

You seem to be too busy to do any painting, but it may be when your basic training is over you will have more time; when you get settled somewhere along the coast and haven’t much more to do than shine the metal of a big gun. Then you may find time to paint and almost anywhere along the coast should be good painting. Your regular painting outfit may be too large to keep with you. I saw once some 5X7 inch paintings made by my instructor Chas. F. Brownie, in France. In looking at them one forgot the small size and they represented the full landscape, as the details were in proportion to their size. You may find such a small outfit useful in your place. I would not want one quite that small, 8X10, 9X12 or 10X12 would be better. There are small outfits to be had I the artists’ supply stores.

I received the announcement of your graduation.

I had a letter from Scruggs. He is in the navy in Texas and is busy making silhouettes in cardboard or ours and British ships so the army fliers can recognize them. He is at an army camp.

You say you are on the track of some portraits of the boys. An art student friend of mine in the other war did some of that for pay, but stopped when he was warned that doing them for pay was against army regulations. The rules may be different now—But get all the practice yo can in drawing portraits or anything else. You can’t do too much drawing now at your stage of the game.

In drawing portraits always remember that the skeleton underneath is of all importance. The character of the subject

and solidity of the head in space are hidden in the planes. We all have ears, eyes, noses, etc. but the method of their arrangement, size, spacing, is contained in the planes of the of the head. The more irregular, more abrupt the transitions from plane to plane the easier it is to draw the person; conversely, the more one plane merges smoothly into another the harder to draw. Old people usually belong in the first group and young people in the latter. Women, girls, and babies are the most difficult, hard angular men the easier. You should memorize the larger planes of the head so you won't have to think where the edges may be. If you don't have this information I will send it to you.

In connection with planes I remember a picture at Art Inst. by Gari Melchoirs, a favorite painter of mine. It is a mother and child, child in her arms, heads close. The relative difference between the two heads in the subtlety of the planes well seen and painted. The woman's head is harder as compared to the child but the planes in the child's head are there just the same.

I haven't done much painting this summer so far but hope to get started soon. The weather has been much too hot for any studio work. Next week I am going camping at the Rocks and expect to get some painting done. A former student of mine, Ralph Wiskiser, was here one afternoon and we went painting. He was at E..I. before you started and is now head of the art Dept. at University of Louisiana. So far I don't think he has traveled very far in painting pictures, judging by his latest efforts. A few years ago he was much imbued with the modern idea, but I see he is turning again to realism, and he agrees with my ideas that modern art is a degenerative movement; agreeing with the trend in all other fields, a falling away with disintegration. He says the first modernists in France reflected unconsciously the disintegrative forces at work in France that emanated later in the fall of France a few years ago, and he says the moderns following have done a poor job of copying the first ones—a farther degeneracy, maybe?

I don't envy your obstacle run with pack and rifle.

A boy from here qualified as an expert machine gunner and told of shooting over crawling soldiers. Of course it isn't meant

to hit anyone but there can be misjudgment. This boy was last heard from in Hawaii on his way to show the Japs what a great mistake they made.

Guess I better stop here.

Sincerely,

Paul